

Community School District 28 – Superintendent Mabel Sarduy

What are the challenges that District 28 would like to address with this grant?

If you look at District 28 overall, the racial makeup is diverse. The enrollment data, however, reveals that our student population is segregated, with the majority of black students attending schools in the southern end of the district and the majority of white students attending schools in the northern end. In addition to race, our district has many schools where the percentage of students who qualify for free lunch is much higher or much lower than the district average.

Rents and property values on the northern end of the district are much higher—one of the main drivers of socioeconomic and racial segregation in the district. Furthermore, it can be a challenge to travel from one end to the other on a daily basis, which is another impediment to integration.

Even though we are diverse as a district, many of our students from different ends never get to know or interact with one another. In addition to considering admissions practices that encourage integration, we hope that this grant can help us develop strategies to connect students with different backgrounds and celebrate what they all bring to our community.

What has District 28 already done, if anything, to address these challenges?

District 28 is participating in New York State's SIGA NYSIP grant program, which gives districts funds and training to develop integration plans. Through this grant and additional engagement, we have engaged our CEC, parent leaders and unions (CSA, UFT, DC37). We have also discussed some initial changes to enrollment practices in the district in order to increase diversity in our schools.

The district has also been working with the Office of Student Enrollment towards a new Diversity in Admissions priority to be implemented as early as fall 2020 admissions. A certain percent of non-zoned, middle school offers to middle schools in the northern end of the district would be prioritized for students from the southern part of the district.

What we've done so far has only been a small step, but we feel that it is important to engage with our community in order to continue to build on our vision for diversity in our schools.

What is your vision for diversity in your district, and how can this grant help?

We want all students to leave District 28 prepared to be lifelong learners, ready to engage and thrive within a global multicultural society. We believe students would benefit from schools that more closely reflect the diversity of the entire district.

We have already discussed changes to enrollment policies, but we wish to connect with our community in order to consider what next steps our district could take. This grant could give us the resources necessary to have a meaningful conversation with our entire community, hearing the voices of families across the district.